



OVERVIEW OF THE OMBUDSMAN COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON INTEREST COMMUNITY BOARD

Trisha L. Henshaw | Executive Director

Common Interest Communities Workgroup
Virginia Housing Commission
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PURPOSE | Ombudsman Committee

The Common Interest Community Board (Board) established the Ombudsman Committee (Committee) in March 2014. The Committee was initially established to consider methods to resolve issues related to associations not having complaint procedures, as required by law and regulation. After further discussion, the Committee was charged with reviewing the following topics:

- Unregistered common interest community associations
- Associations lacking complaint procedures to resolve complaints from members and citizens
- Registration issues for associations with defunct/dysfunctional boards
- Recommendations regarding House Bill 332 from the 2014 Session

The Committee consists of four members of the Board, including two common interest community managers, a member of an association, and a certified public accountant involved with common interest communities. In addition, the Board Chair serves as an ex-officio member.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

At the Board's September meeting, the Committee presented its initial recommendations regarding objectives and focus. After discussion, the Board agreed that the Committee's focus going forward will be education and outreach to associations, members, common interest community managers, related professionals (e.g., attorneys, accountants, real estate agents), and others. While the Board is prohibited by law from interfering in the internal activities of associations (unless to

prevent or cure violations), it does have an opportunity to collaborate with other organizations and work with associations to provide general information regarding common interest communities, and the rights and responsibilities of those who have agreed to be a part of an association.

In addition, the Board considered the Committee's recommendations regarding House Bill 332, which proposed to direct the Ombudsman to develop a bill of rights for owners in common interest communities. After discussion, the Board adopted the following statement and asked it be conveyed to the Common Interest Communities Workgroup.

The Board wishes to advise the Common Interest Communities Workgroup of the Virginia Housing Commission that a committee to improve education and outreach from the Board and Office of the CIC Ombudsman has been established. The Ombudsman Committee will oversee the education and outreach initiative in order to maximize such efforts in line with current resource availability.

Further, the Committee will use the "bill of rights" in HB 332 as part of the foundation for educational resources to be developed. The Board indicates that the requirements imposed in the proposed legislation may be far-reaching in terms of codification in the law, but believes that the impetus for the bill—educating owners about their rights—can be achieved through non-legislatively mandated education and outreach methods.

NEXT STEPS

The Committee will next meet in December to develop an implementation plan for its education and outreach efforts. The plan is expected to include:

- Consideration of communication methods and delivery
 - Print brochures and information sheets
 - Web-based videos
 - E-mail communications
 - Internet-based information and reference material through DPOR and partner sites
- Identification of industry collaborations and partnerships
- Outreach and education budget development, including procurement of graphic design services, printing, and other services that may be necessary
- Time-line for implementation